

## Abraham Lincoln papers

From C. F. McCay to Abraham Lincoln, December 18, 1860

Augusta Georgia

Decr 18th 1860

Dear Sir

A quiet Union man, who loves his whole country, has no wish or desire for office, & would accept none, writes to you to make suggestions which he thinks might be of service to the Republic which now seems to be falling to pieces. These suggestions go to the root of the present troubles & fears & alarms. They are not the counsels or thoughts of any one but myself & I alone am responsible for them; but believing they can be accepted by a true patriot who would save his country from ruin & win himself immortal fame I suggest them.

I almost despair of the Republic, but give them to you for reflection & consideration in hopes that they may lead to something that will save our country.

Unless some such programme is adopted, the Ohio & the Potomac will soon be the dividing lines of two confederacies discordant belligerent & hostile. The interests & prejudices & opinions of the South are of too large & important & divided, to submit to the rule of a man whom they know to be elected by a party bent on their ruin — ruin to their material interests, to their peace & safety, to their rights & their honor, & I do not believe they will do it. As it is, both parties here look to disunion; those for immediate secession differ but little from the rest; both are for disunion but differ as to time; the moderate & conservative propose to demand their full rights, or what they esteem their full rights -- and to take nothing less — & when these are refused to leave the Union. The North will never grant these. They will never yield them never never. And thus disunion comes sooner or later.

My name is of no importance. But I give it to show that I am sincere & writing in good faith. If my views are not approved I ask that this whole communication shall be confidential & returned to me.

In Roman history the plebians seceded from the government rebelled & were pasified by the establishment of the Tribune who had a veto on all laws of the Senate.

You have been elected to office on principles opposed by the whole south — not receiving a single Southern vote except from a few northern or foreign citizens of the border states & perhaps a thousand renegade Southrons.

They fear that you will use the government to suppress slavery in the South directly or indirectly, to exclude them from the Territories, to destroy slavery in the District of Columbia, to encourage the northern abolitionists who are aiming at its destruction here & every where, to discourage the faithful execution of the fugitive slave law by appointment of marshalls & others who in heart are opposed to the law & will not aid properly in its execution, these & other interferences with the internal management of the states were never contemplated by its founders & are unconstitutional in its spirit. Some do not believe these to be your intentions, but they are known to be the wishes & intents & desires of many of your supporters at the north as they have distinctly avowed them.

As President of the whole country you do not & can not intend to carry out these views. By the programme indicated with in you can give satisfactory evidence & security to the south that you will not interfere with them & thus save the Union & give time for such wise laws & amendments to the constitution as shall be found to be necessary.

You will still be every whit a President as the Queen of England is queen. It is already customary at Washington to leave most of the appointments to the Cabinet officers & as to laws by the selection of the persons who are to approve of your acts you retain the whole power over your acts.

Such men as Davis of Maryland & Clay<sup>1</sup> of Kentucky would be as objectionable to the south as Seward or Chase.<sup>2</sup> Such men as Stephens or Rives<sup>3</sup> would approve of every thing an honest President would desire. They are patriots who love the whole country & would wrong none

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1 Henry Winter Davis and Cassius M. Clay

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2 William H. Seward and Salmon P. Chase

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3 Alexander H. Stephens and William C. Rives

Programme

1 A kind of abdication

2 The appointment of two representative men to the cabinet south of Washington such as Wm. C. Rives or Alex H Stephens or Judge Sharkey<sup>4</sup> or Mr Crittenden<sup>5</sup>

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4 ID: William L. Sharkey, the former Chief Justice of Mississippi, was perhaps the most prominent opponent of secession in his state and later served as the provisional governor of Mississippi during Reconstruction.

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5 John J. Crittenden

3 The agreement to appoint no man to office south of Washington except on the approval of these men & the to remove if all that they recommend

4 To do the same for all Marshalls in the northern states & all other persons who may be in any way connected with the execution of the Fugitive slave law

5 To do the same for all Territorial offices

6 To make no recommendation to Congress nor to approve of any law passed by Congress with regard to slavery or having any connection with slavery in regard to the District of Columbia or the Territories or the Southern States except with the approbation of these cabinet officers

7 To enforce all the laws of the land (including the Fugitive law & the laws for the collection of revenue) in their true spirit & intent so that every constitutional right of every portion of the country shall be sustained.

8 To adopt or approve of no regulations with regard to the Post Office which shall not be approved by these two officers, particularly with regard to the distribution of documents in the States that are in violation of the local laws.

9 To do nothing in any way affecting the institution of slavery or which in the opinion of these two officers affects slavery unless with the approbation of these two officers.

Very Respectfully

Yours &c

C. F. McCay